NOVA SCOTIA
Tourism Partnership
COUNCIL

E-Marketing Strategy for Tourism
Prepared by the E-Marketing Committee

E-Marketing Strategy for Tourism

Introduction

The Nova Scotia Tourism Strategy identified a need to look more closely at the way we in the tourism industry use E-marketing, particularly the Internet. The Internet is identified in the strategy as a means of delivering programming and business results. Our plans to develop new technical capacity and infrastructure (such as e-commerce capacity) are substantial components of Strategic Objective # 6 **B** *Improving the business environment.*

As an initial means of reviewing the current approach to E-marketing, the Tourism Partnership Council struck a task force in April 2001 to look at the current plan and make practical recommendations. One of its recommendations was to strike a standing committee to manage ongoing e-marketing opportunities and help direct the implementation of the Task Force=s recommendations. In addition, the E-Marketing Committee was requested to refine the Council=s 2000 on-line marketing strategy.

The E-Marketing Committee unanimously agreed that NovaScotia.com is not a stand-alone piece of marketing **B** it is an integrated part of the information machinery and a major part of our E-Marketing Strategy. NovaScotia.com acts as media and channel (delivery) mechanisms for consumers to obtain information and make a purchasing decision.

Other elements of the strategy include Check In, Distribution Centre, direct e-marketing and promoting Nova Scotia on-line. This document outlines The Tourism Partnership Council=s planned E-Marketing Strategy for Tourism, which includes a more refined web strategy.

E-Marketing Committee Members included:

- Chair, Doreen Malone, Neptune Theatre
- Bob Boyd, NS Tourism and Culture
- Charles Clerk, Island Beach Company
- Randolph De Gooyer, Maritime Marlin Travel
- Jim Laceby, Blomidon Inn
- Stephen Parsons, NorthSeas Software, Inc.
- Stephen Simpson, The Orb Factory
- Vickie Siscoe, NS Tourism and Culture
- John Somers, NS Tourism and Culture
- Karl Webb, Havenside Bed & Breakfast
- Cathy Kalil, Tourism Partnership Council

How to Use This Document

E-Marketing is the promotion of a product, company, service or web site on-line and can include a variety of activities from on-line advertising to search engine optimization and much more.

The e-marketing strategy has a number of components:

This **Introduction** outlines the components of the strategy and their intended use. Also included is a brief overview of the strategy=s purpose and scope.

The **Background** provides an overview of the Tourism marketing web site, www.NovaScotia.com and its economic impact based in inquiries. Also, included in this **Background** is a brief description of our Check In Reservations and Information Web Site, www.checkinnovascotia.com.

The E-Marketing Strategy for Tourism is a key component of Nova Scotia=s Integrated Tourism Plan and acts as media and channel (delivery) mechanisms for consumers to obtain information and make a purchasing decision.

The E-Marketing Strategy was developed within the framework of the Nova Scotia=s Tourism Strategy and is consistent with the province=s overall Annual Marketing Plan. In particular, one of the key issues identified in the 2003 Marketing Plan is the opportunity to reach a larger audience and build relationships via the Internet. The E-Marketing Strategy provides the framework for achieving this objective.

In addition, the E-Marketing Strategy, particularly the usage of the Internet as a marketing tool, is a key part of the Tourism Strategy under each of the Strategic Objectives related to market opportunities. These strategic objectives include:

- $ Grow revenues from the touring market.
  - Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Ontario, Northeastern U.S., Europe
- $ Build a twelve-month season.
- $ Develop viable niche markets.
  - Golf, Outdoor and Nature, Group Touring, Meetings and Conventions

The essence of the E-Marketing Strategy is simple Bgenerate traffic, engage customers and convert/sell. These three strategic thrusts will help determine our overall effectiveness in our e-marketing activity, as well as assist in supporting our partners, shareholders and operators.

- ***Thrust #1 BTraffic focuses on attracting people to NovaScotia.com.***

- ***Thrust #2 – Engagement refers to the extent to which the visitor uses the site. Engagement includes retaining the e-visitor and extending the time they spend on the site.***
- ***Thrust #3 – Conversion/Selling focuses on providing a way for those (such as operators) that can close the sale to reach the visitor. NovaScotia.com acts as a 'facilitator' for the sale or conversion.***

Traffic, Engagement and Conversion provide the overall framework for our E-Marketing Strategy and within this framework, a series of specific tactics for implementing the strategy have been identified.

Background

The Tourism marketing web site, NovaScotia.com began introducing Internet users to Nova Scotia in 1996. The original site, virtualNS.ca, was a 'place marketing' site that promoted Nova Scotia for business, as well as tourism. This medium and ever-changing technology, has brought the province to the global marketplace. In just six years, web activity has expanded from a modest initial presence on the web, to an established part of the marketing mix, which delivers a significant portion of our measurable results and the highest measurable ROI of all media.

In 2000, Internet inquiries were up 49% over 1999, for a total of 69,000+ requests for literature. Comparably, Internet inquiries for 2001 were up 57% over 2000, for a total of 106,000+ requests. There is also greater attention being attributed to the crossover between conventional mediums and the web, with thousands of visits trackable to print advertising. Internet inquiries are similar to any inquiry, they can be a result of a specific advertisement or they can be a result of other media. Research indicates that web inquirers spend more during their visit then the average visitor.

Novascotia.com is a marketing and communications tool, which integrates with and supports other marketing media, such as advertising, print media, literature, direct mail fulfillment, and research as a method of primary data collection. We view our web presence as helping to sell Nova Scotia as a destination (including closing the sale) in a number of key ways:

- A response mechanism for direct-response advertising in other media;
- A customer information provider for both general touring markets and specific niche markets;
- A tool to assist visitors to navigate the increasing number of Nova Scotia tourism-related operators/ partners on the net;
- A transaction processing vehicle;
- A vehicle to serve the travel trade channel; and
- A travel media provider to maintain Nova Scotia=s valuable relationships with travel media throughout the world.

Check In Reservations and Information Web Site (www.checkinnovascotia.com)

In 2000, the Department of Tourism and Culture entered into a five-year agreement with CorporaTel to provide contact management services, which includes call centre services and web services. The Check In service provides visitors with an opportunity to request travel literature to help plan their trip, obtain additional specific information and to make accommodation reservations.

The mandate of the service is to offer one stop shopping with the ability to immediately close the sale and to represent those operators who may not have the resources to reach our visitors. Accommodation operators pay a 10% commission on reservations made through the service. Novascotia.com links to checkinnovascotia.com for reservations but individual operators may have direct links back to their site for reservations.

This service began in September 2000. Thirteen reservations were made on-line through the Check In service in 2000. This number increased in 2001 to 973. All fixed roof member properties can now be booked on line.

Our E-Marketing operating principles:

The following principles guide our e-marketing effort in order to provide our e-visitors with the information necessary to be better informed and to entice them to make Nova Scotia their vacation destination.

- $ ***Visibility:*** Making sure we capitalize on opportunities to attract people to our site.
- $ ***Compelling Content:*** Include communications with impact that motivate people to find out more and actually buy / visit it.
- $ ***Navigation (ease of use):*** Make information available in an intuitive format and structure so the potential tourist can easily retrieve the information they need to make their purchasing decision.
- $ ***Integration:*** Our e-marketing initiatives must support and integrate with our media mix and other marketing tools, such as advertising, print media, literature, direct marketing, fulfillment and research.
- $ ***Customer Driven Results:*** On-line marketing initiatives, are highly measurable. Thus, we will measure the results of our initiatives to ensure they generate qualified inquiries, increase awareness of Nova Scotia as a tourism destination, increase visitation and extend our consumer market reach.
- $ ***Appropriate Technology:*** We must invest in the technologies, which most specifically advance our marketing needs. With limited resources we will make choices that maximize our return on investment.
- $ ***Partnership:*** Reciprocal links, co-sponsorship and/or co-branding, offering packaged opportunities will all be part of the mix of this medium to foster partnership programs.

Essence of the E-Marketing Strategy:

The basis of the strategy is simple **B** *generate traffic, engage customers and convert/sell.*

Traffic
Keeping in mind that our overall mission is to grow the tourism industry in Nova Scotia, we must ensure we can attract traffic to the site. Simply stated, we must attract people to our sites or to our partner sites.

Engagement
In order to attract potential consumers and keep them on our sites, we must engage our audience by providing content or directing them to reciprocal links (partners) that adds value to our targeted markets (consumers). This will generate the desired interaction with our customers. The customer will experience the content necessary to help them make a decision whether or not to visit Nova Scotia. Engagement is part of how we grow revenues.

Conversion
By putting the right content in the right place at the right time for consumers, we enhance the opportunity for conversion. Conversion is the measurable output of our initiatives and is the clearest measurement of the success of our on-line marketing programs. Through research we can quantify the economic benefits of our program. For example, people who have requested information receive a follow-up phone call to determine whether or not they vacationed in Nova Scotia and how much money they spend during that trip.

Traffic, Engagement and *Conversion* tactics will help improve our overall effectiveness in our e-marketing activity, as well as assist in supporting our partners, stakeholders and operators.

Thrust # 1 **B** Traffic

Why traffic?
Traffic focuses on attracting people to novascotia.com and its partners. Therefore, our goals within this strategic thrust are as follows:

- **$ Increase traffic to novascotia.com; and,**
- **$ Increase awareness of Nova Scotia as a destination.**

Both traditional and web specific marketing activities generate traffic. These activities will attract both new and returning visitors to the site. Some of the traffic generation comes under the scope of this plan and some is a consequence of conventional media placements.

Traditional media includes:

- **$** Direct mail, magazine ads, newspaper ads, television ads, the Doers and Dreamers Guide, other literature.

Web specific marketing activities include:

- Direct to consumer e-mail, banners ads, placement of links, search engine listings, key words, and referrals.

Partnerships in Building Traffic:
Marketing partnerships can and do play a significant role in building traffic to Novascotia.com. By working with partners, we can access a broader base of potential Internet audiences in a more cost-effective manner.

Some of the ways this will happen include:

$ Cost-sharing and co-branding of out-bound e-mail campaigns to rented and / or in-house e-mail lists

$ Cost-sharing and co-branding of co-branded on-line advertisements (tiles and banners)

$ Cost-sharing and co-branding of key-word bidding campaigns

$ Joint, co-branded splash pages to receive visits, direct audience to core and partner content (covered under 'Engagement') and provide measurement of results

Traditional Marketing Co-ops where Nova Scotia responds to the request all have NovaScotia.com along with the 800# and may have partner information.

Direct-to-Consumer E-mails are also a component of the On-line Internet Marketing Program with Bay Ferries. In this instance, a rental list was used. Also included in this program were *purchase of both key words for search engines and banner positioning.*

Traffic Measurements:
During the past two years Internet inquiries have increased by approximately 50%. To date in 2002, there has been a 33% increase in Internet inquiries. These numbers cannot be considered in isolation. As more and more people use this method to obtain information, the number of inquiries from traditional media or other traditional sources decreases.

To determine whether our traffic growth strategies are working, we will measure::

$ Number of site visits
$ Number of requests for information
$ Number of downloads of information
$ Total web inquiries

$ ***In 2002-03, a 10% increase in overall inquiries is expected with a 25% increase in***

Internet inquiries contributing to this increase.

Thrust # 2 **B** Engagement

Why engagement?
Engaging the audience refers to the extent to which the visitor uses the site. While the first thrust concentrates on getting the visitor to our sites, engagement focuses on getting the visitor to use the site and continue to use it in the future. Therefore, our goals for engagement are:

- **$ To maximize the contact between the e-visitor and our content to help them make a decision to visit Nova Scotia and provide assistance with trip planning.**

- **$ To make the web site a useful tool in trip planning.**

We want to develop a relationship with the visitor and this is done through the content and the level of detail in the site. The everyday user of the site must be able to access all components of the site without needing the most up-to-date software.

Partnerships in 'Engagement':
Partnerships will play an important role in engaging our customers. Our partners are frequently closest to the end product, either because they have knowledge and detailed web-ready content in a specific area, or because they are actual suppliers with the capacity to close a sale. In either case, inclusion of and integration with partner content will help bring customers and product closer together. Our potential visitors will have access to more tangible information about our tourism products and our industry partners will have more opportunities to sell.

Partnership in the engagement stage will take a number of forms:

- $ Conscious, deliberate arms length mutual agreements with organizations (e.g., Golf Nova Scotia, NSATA, Nova Scotia Museums, Taste of Nova Scotia, etc.) to provide web content to cover specific product areas. This content can be provided in a co-branded web presence.
- $ Mutual links to partners' sites that meet tourism-relevant criteria.
- $ Specific partner content embedded in Novascotia.com, including travel packages, listings, etc.
- $ Development of standards and policies for our partners.

Engagement Measurements:
There are a number of methods to measure how well novascotia.com is doing in engaging our visitors. They include:
- $ Number of repeat visits
- $ Time spent on site
- $ Number of page views (includes information on specific sections of the site)
- $ On-line feedback
- $ Visitor comments
- $ Viral marketing

Thrust # 3 **B** Conversion/Selling

Why conversion/selling?
Novascotia.com does not close the sale through actual transactions. However, through growing *traffic* and *engaging the visitor*, the site provides a way for those that can close the sale to reach the visitor. The site acts as a 'facilitator' for the sale or *conversion*. Our goal for conversion is as follows:

- **$** Increase visitation to Nova Scotia by providing e-visitors access to purchase their Nova Scotia vacation.

The following programs would be considered 'facilitator' measures for closing the sale: Electronic Literature, Check In Reservations, request for information and related database building.

Partnerships in Conversion:
Partnerships play a role in conversion since end-suppliers of product actually have the capacity to close a sale with a transaction. While there is overlap here with the partnership element of engagement, the principle is that when a visitor chooses to go to partners content through a visit to Novascotia.com, even if there is no direct evidence of conversion, the site has generated a lead for a partner.

Conversion Measurements:
The main measurement of selling novascotia.com is from the annual conversion study, which surveys visitors who requested information on their trip experience in Nova Scotia. Measurable objectives will include:

- **$** Survey results from Annual Conversion Study
- **$** Number of PDFs downloaded
- **$** Number of literature requests
- **$** Number of on-line bookings made through checkinnovascotia.com